AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This study assessed whether overweight candidates, especially women, would be rated lower than equally qualified normal-weight candidates in a structured interview. The study also examined whether interactions of prior weight-based prejudice and weight similarity between raters and candidates would affect overall ratings. Two hundred forty-six undergraduate students from a diverse mid-western university with generally moderate weight-based bias levels served as raters in the study. Contrary to previous research findings, significant evidence for weight-based discrimination was not found. There was very little variability between raters overall interview scores for both overweight and normal-weight candidates. The findings suggest that the structured interview process increased inter-rater reliability and limited the existing weight-based bias that affected the overall interview ratings and hiring decision.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF WEIGHT-BASED BIAS WITHIN THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of Psychology

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The state of overall physical health across the workforce in the United States is of epidemic proportions (Romero & Marini, 2006). The prevalence of obese adults in the United States has risen substantially in recent decades. The American Obesity Association reported that nearly one-third of American adults suffer from obesity (Ferraro & Kelley-Moore, 2003). Globally, obesity affects more than 300 million adults in the developed world (Bleich, Cutler, Murray, & Adams, 2008).

Employers often use physical characteristics such as weight to make hiring decisions instead of job related criteria (Kristen, 2002). Weight-based discrimination deprives employers of potentially valuable employees, and harms those who do not get the job both economically and personally (Kristen). Moreover, weight-based discrimination in employment processes involves legal, human resource utilization, and ethical concerns (Roehling, 1999). The structured interview reduces discrimination and increases fairness in the hiring process (Brecher, Bragger, & Kutcher, 2006).

Weight-based bias refers to any combination of negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviors toward overweight individuals due to their physical weight (Finkelstein, Frautschy-Demuth & Sweeney, 2007). According to the Centers for Disease Control, obesity is defined as an excessive amount of body fat or adiposity in relation to lean body mass. An individual is considered to be overweight with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25kg/m^2 over his/her ideal weight (Romero et al., 2006). Due to the idea that individuals could differ greatly in appearance, but share the same numerical weight, the proposed study focuses on perceptions instead of numerical weight criterion. Parallel to the

majority of literature pertaining to this topic, the terms obesity, overweight, and fat will be used interchangeably (Finkelstein et al., 2007; Smith, Schmoll, Konik & Oberlander, 2007; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Roehling, 1999).

The purpose of the current investigation is to determine whether overweight applicants, especially women, are rated lower than normal-weight applicants in the structured interview setting. In addition, the current study will explore whether prior weight-based prejudice levels will interact with applicant gender to influence applicant scores. Finally, the study will examine whether similarity between the applicant and raters body weight influences interview ratings.

Physical Attractiveness

People tend to form first impressions of others on the basis of immediately apparent features (e.g., physical appearance) (Watkins & Johnston, 2000). Physical size, particularly weight, is often linked to physical attractiveness (Bell & McLaughlin, 2006; Cusack, 2000). A study by Langlois et al. (2000) found substantial agreement across cultures about who is and is not considered attractive. Attractive individuals are often attributed positive qualities, and perceived to be smarter, happier, more sociable, more honest, and more successful (Cusack, 2000; Bell & McLaughlin, 2006; Langlois et al., 2000; Watkins & Johnston, 2000; Marlowe, Schneider & Nelson, 1996).

Attractive candidates are often assumed to be more qualified for employment than unattractive candidates (Hosoda, Stone-Romero & Coats, 2003; Watkins & Johnston, 2000). However, in the majority of instances physical attractiveness is unrelated to job performance (Bell & McLaughlin, 2006; Watkins & Johnston). Watkins and Johnston found that physical attractiveness made a significant impact on evaluations of job

applicants made in the initial screening phase of the selection process. Similarly, Marlowe et al. (1996) found that attractive candidates were preferred over less attractive candidates. These findings indicated that discrimination based on physical appearance is prevalent in hiring decisions despite equivalent qualifications. In a meta-analysis, Hosoda et al. (2003) found that "attractive individuals fared better than their less attractive counterparts in a variety of job-related outcomes" (p. 443) (e.g., hiring, ranking, predicted success).

Weight-based Stigma, Bias, and Workplace Discrimination

The term stigma refers to a social defect whereby an individual is perceived to have an undesirable physical or character trait in society (Finkelstein et al., 2007). Obesity is a physical trait that deviates from the accepted cultural norm and is often seen as a sign of flawed character, thus viewed as a stigma. Overweight individuals are often categorized as unhealthy, unattractive, unpopular, unhappy, less intelligent, less ambitious, and less determined compared to normal-weight individuals (Polinko & Popovich, 2001; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Smith et al., 2007).

Contrary to medical findings, society tends to view obesity as a condition that is controllable by the overweight individual (Finkelstein et al., 2007; Hebl & Mannix, 2003; King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006). Overweight individuals are viewed as gluttonous, weak-willed, and lacking self-discipline (Anonymous, 2006; Fikkan, Rothblum, Teachman & Mallett, 2005; Hebl et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2007). The obese stigma is transferred to the workplace, and is associated with an overweight individual's approach to work. Overweight workers are often perceived as unprofessional, lacking personal hygiene, lazy, unproductive, and unsuccessful (Carr & Friedman, 2005; Hebl &

Mannix, 2005; Sharpiro, Quinones, & King, 2007; Smith et al., 2007). The aforementioned beliefs about obese individuals have formed a negative stereotype for the overweight population.

Weight-based bias refers to any combination of negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviors toward overweight individuals due to their physical weight. Weight-based bias is a combination of three components: an emotional component (e.g., dislike), a cognitive component (e.g., stereotypes), and a behavioral tendency component (e.g., unfair treatment)(Finkelstein et al., 2007). Discrimination is the differential treatment based on social group (e.g., overweight population), and often occurs in professional employment (Hebl & Turchin, 2005).

Overweight individuals are less likely to be hired than normal-weight candidates, even with equal qualifications (Brochu & Morrison, 2007; Fikkan et al., 2005; Finkelstein et al., 2007; Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Polinko & Popovich, 2001; Puhl & Brownell, 2003; Roehling, 1999; Roehling, Roehling, & Pichler, 2007). Overweight women are more likely to be evaluated negatively in the hiring process than overweight men (Brochu & Morrison, 2007; Finkelstein et al., 2007; Pingitore, Dugoni, Tindale & Spring, 1994). Pingitore et al. found that applicants' body weight explained about 35% of the variance in hiring decisions. Hebl and Kleck found that persons in the mere proximity of an overweight individual are judged more negatively in employment decisions than those seen with normal-weight individuals.

Weight-based discrimination in employment processes involves legal, human resource utilization, and ethical concerns (Roehling, 1999). Ilgen (1990) challenged industrial/organizational (I/O) psychologists to pursue issues of health at work, and make

valuable contributions to the design of practices that have positive impact on the overall effectiveness of organizations (e.g., selection processes). I/O psychologists have attempted to identify and eliminate biases in personnel selection (Watkins & Johnston, 2000).

Similarity-Attraction Paradigm

Similarity judgments allow an individual to simplify their view of the world by organizing and classifying people in order to quickly make generalizations when encountering someone new (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan & Schmitt, 2003). The similarity-attraction paradigm states the more demographic similarity between individuals, the more attitudinal similarity is assumed; thus, leading to interpersonal attraction (Goldberg, 2003). Evaluating a similar candidate more favorably than a dissimilar other allows the rater to validate his or her positive identity (Goldberg; Pulakos & Wexley, 1983; Sacco et al., 2003). Further, raters that have similar demographic characteristics (e.g., race, sex) to applicants tend to be more positive toward employment evaluations and decisions (Dobbins, Thung-Rung & Farh, 1992; Judge, Higgins & Cable, 2000; Manshor, Jusoh & Simun, 2002).

Many studies have tested the similarity-attraction model exploring demographic characteristics between applicants and raters in interview situations. Wexley and Nemeroff (1974) found that the degree of similarity between two individuals influenced evaluation. Goldberg (2003) found recruiter-applicant race similarity had significant effects on overall interview assessments. Studies on panel interview ratings have also found similarity effects between applicant race and rater race (Buckley, Jackson, Bolino, Veres III & Field, 2007; McFarland, Ryan, Sacco & Kriska 2004). Manshor et al. (2002)

examined the influence of hiring managers' gender on selection preferences, and found that both male and female managers preferred to select candidates of their own gender when the candidates were equally qualified.

Few studies address whether individuals' weight would make them more or less probable to rate overweight candidates differently (Roehling, 1999). According to the similarity-attraction paradigm, overweight raters would rate overweight applicants more fairly then non-obese raters. Moreover, non-overweight raters would rate overweight applicants less fairly then obese raters. Shrauger and Patterson (1973) stated that when evaluating others, an individual is likely to focus on dimensions (e.g., body image) relevant to one's self-image. A study by O'Brien, Hunter, Halberstadt, and Anderson (2007) found that appearance-related comparison processes are significant in the relationship between body image and anti-fat attitudes. Pingitore et al. (1994) tested the interaction between applicant weight and rater body schema. Overweight applicants were less preferred than non-overweight applicants when evaluated by women with high body satisfaction in regards to weight. These findings indicate a possible similarity-attraction effect on overweight applicant evaluation ratings.

Legal Guidelines

Obesity may be a bona fide concern following a hiring decision in regards to job placement, but it should not be a determinant in the hiring decision itself (Schuite et al., 2007). Discrimination against hiring overweight employees occurs often (Kristen, 2002; Schulte et al., 2007; Roehling, 1999; Romero & Marini, 2006; Wolkinson & Roehling, 2008). A survey conducted in 2002 reported that 60% of overweight women, and 40% of overweight men believed they had been discriminated against in employment (Kristen).

To date, Michigan is the only state that specifically prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of weight (Johnson & Wilson, 1995; Kristen, 2007; Roehling, 1999; Schulte et al., 2007).

Due to the lack of specific federal law against discrimination on the basis of weight, protection from prejudice in the employment cycle (e.g., selection) varies by law, jurisdiction, and ruling (Solovay, 2000). The premise of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) anti-discrimination legislation is that employers should solely make employment decisions based on one's ability to perform the job regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, color, veteran status, or disability (The SHRM Learning System, 2008). In the case that a hiring decision based on a protected characteristic occurs, it is the employer's responsibility to establish that it is a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ) (Roehling, 1999). In some cases, the courts have ruled that obesity is a disability and justified under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (Johnson, 1995; Johnson & Wilson, 1995). Under ADA, no consistent records indicate obesity as a form of disability (Schulte et al., 2007). Claims based on weight, in addition to a protected class factor such as sex or race, is considered under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Johnson; Kristen, 2002). Legislatively, weight-based discrimination has been marginally addressed (Romero & Marini, 2006).

Obesity as a Disability

Many different health problems (e.g., hypertension, high blood pressure, heart disease, mental health issues) stem from being obese, consequently obesity is often perceived as a disability by employers (Cusack, 2000; Romero & Marini, 2006). Employers face rising healthcare costs and a greater number of lawsuits based on

disability discrimination (Louvet, 2007; Romero & Marini, 2006). A study by Brecher et al. (2006) found that job applicants with a disability were evaluated differently than equally qualified applicants without a disability. Moreover, Louvet found that applicants with a visible disability received significantly lower evaluations than applicants without a disability for jobs that required high levels of interpersonal contact. Although specific legal protection from weight-based discrimination in employment is sparse, court cases that viewed obesity as a disability had a tendency to rule in favor of the overweight individual (e.g., Cook vs. Rhode Island)(Romero & Marini, 2006).

Structured Interview

The interview is the most popular, and widely used staffing tool in the selection process (Buckley et al., 2007; Buckley, Norris & Wiese, 2000; Dobbins et al., 1992; Judge et al., 2000; McFarland et al., 2004; Posthuma, Morgeson & Campion, 2002). The unstructured interview typically is relatively unplanned, and consists of non-standardized conversation and subjective questioning between the interviewer and interviewee regarding selection (Judge & Heneman, 2003). The structured interview is more reliable and valid in comparison to the unstructured interview (Buckley et al., 2000; Dobbins et al., 1992; Jelf, 1999; Judge et al., 2000; Judge & Heneman, 2003). Common characteristics of the structured interview include standardized questions based on job analysis, the same questions asked to all candidates, responses numerically evaluated, and the use of detailed anchored rating scales to score each response (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005).

In a meta-analysis comparing selection interviews, Conway, Goodman, and Jako (1995) found that highly structured interviews were more valid ($r = .67$) in comparison to

unstructured interviews (r = .34). The structured interview predicts success of candidates with a greater degree of consistent accuracy, and allows for a higher amount of inter-rater agreement in the evaluation process (Judge & Heneman, 2003). In addition, validity of the structured interview often results in greater legal defensibility in regards to hiring practice (Brecher et al., 2006).

Although the structured interview is far more effective than the traditional interview, many potential problems could affect interview scores negatively. By definition, an oral interview is a test and must meet the same fairness requirements for all interviewees (Buckley et al., 2000). A continuous challenge for the interviewer is to focus on the qualifications of the applicant and keep biased feelings out of the interview (Hackney et al., 1994). Potential sources of interviewer bias include applicant appearance (e.g., body weight, attractiveness) and similarity effects (e.g., gender, race)(Brecher et al., 2006; Judge et al., 2000). Globally, post-1989 studies have repeatedly shown that visual job-irrelevant applicant characteristics influence interviewers' ratings negatively (Jelf, 1999). In a laboratory study, applicant obesity had a negative influence on perceptions of personality traits and accounted for 35 percent of the variance in hiring decisions (Posthuma et al., 2002). On the contrary, Brecher et al. found that when employers structured the interview process, discrimination decreased and fairness increased.

Weight-based Bias in the Structured Interview

One of the most important responsibilities of employers is to ensure fairness in human resource decisions (Kutcher & Bragger, 2004). Discrimination against hiring overweight employees occurs often (Kristen, 2002; Roehling, 1999; Romero et al., 2006; Schulte et al., 2007; Wolkinson & Roehling, 2008). The structured interview reduces

discrimination, increases fairness, and results in greater legal defensibility in regards to employee selection (Brecher et al., 2006). However, few studies have investigated bias against overweight job applicants in the structured interview setting.

Klesges et al. (1990) investigated whether overweight individuals would be evaluated differently compared to normal-weight individuals in interview situations. Moreover, the researchers evaluated the impact of health status (e.g., normal, overweight) and qualification levels (e.g., less than qualified for the job, qualified for the job) in a large sample ($n = 295$) of subjects who were likely to make hiring decisions. Participants first read a job description for the open position, and then read one of two resumes of an individual applying for the job. Both resumes contained similar job history, background information, and highlighted job-related skills. However, the 'unqualified' resume was written to slightly fall below the minimum requirements outlined by the job description, and vise versa for the 'qualified' resume.

Participants then viewed videotaped simulated interviews featuring either overweight or normal-weight applicants. The interviews were similarly scripted, and varied only on qualification levels. At the end of the interview the interviewer inquired about the health status of the applicant. The normal-weight applicant responded, "I'm pretty healthy - my health is generally good." In contrast, the overweight applicant responded, "I'm pretty healthy – I know I need to lose a few pounds, but my health is generally good." The applicant's face was electronically blurred to control for facial attractiveness, and the off-camera voice was constant across recordings. The participants were instructed to rate their impressions of the applicants in four distinct areas (e.g., work

habits, medically related absenteeism and reliability, non-medically related absenteeism and reliability, and interpersonal skills)(Klesges et al., 1990).

Klesges et al. (1990) found that subjects were much more likely to hire the qualified applicants over the nonqualified applicants, $F(1, 294) = 309.71$ ($p < 0.001$). However, the normal-weight applicants were rated significantly more positive in comparison to their overweight counterparts, $F(1,294) = 4.86$ ($p < 0.009$). Further, the obese applicants were viewed as having poorer work habits, more likely to be absent, and more likely to have emotional and interpersonal problems than the normal-weight applicants.

Pingitore et al. (1994) assessed whether overweight individuals, especially women, would be discriminated against in an employment decision. In addition, the researchers examined whether decision-maker's negative personality attributions about the applicant would mediate a decision not to hire an overweight individual. Lastly, the researchers predicted that the subjects with a high body schema, of which are both highly concerned and highly satisfied with their own bodies, would react most negatively to overweight applicants. Three-hundred and twenty introductory psychology students (99 men, 221 women) were randomly assigned to view videotaped interviews, rate job applicants, and complete demographic and body schema questionnaires. Applicants, both a male and a female actor, were filmed as normal-weight and obese candidates, using theatrical prosthesis.

Overweight applicants were recommended for employment significantly less often ($M = 4.22, SD = 1.17$) than normal-weight applicants with equivalent qualifications ($M = 5.75, SD = .93$). Additionally, the applicant's body weight explained 34.6% of the

variance in the hiring decision. Further, overweight female applicants (*M = 3.61, SD = 1.0*) were less likely to be hired than overweight male applicants (*M = 4.83, SD = .96*), $F(1, 288) = 138.04$ ($p < .01$). Furthermore, gender bias against women explained 10.4% of the variance in the hiring decision. Results also revealed that overweight applicants (*M = 87.79, SD = 10.21*) were perceived more negatively than normal-weight applicants (*M = 76.04, SD = 12.96*). Finally, Pingitore and colleagues (1994) found no evidence to suggest that lean raters exhibited greater bias against overweight applicants, and favored normal-weight individuals.

Kutcher and Bragger (2004) evaluated whether the bias against overweight job candidates would be less prominent when the interview is highly standardized. Moreover, Kutcher and colleagues isolated the variable of candidate weight, and compared its impact during structured and unstructured interview situations. The same female actor was videotaped as a normal-weight and overweight candidate, manipulating appearance with the aid of a stuffed suit. One hundred and thirty-three participants were randomly assigned to view videotaped structured or unstructured interviews. Similar to Pingitore et al. (1994), overweight applicant rating scores were significantly lower than those of the normal-weight applicants, $F(1, 131) = 14.26$ ($p < .05$). Further, the structured interview decreased the variability between raters and reduced bias against overweight job candidates.

Many commonalities exist in the majority of weight-based bias research methodology. First, participant samples often consist of undergraduate college students (Brouchu & Morrison, 2007; Kutcher & Bragger, 2004; Pingitore et al., 1994; Shapiro et al., 2007). In a meta-analysis of physical attractiveness on job-related outcomes, Hosoda

et al. (2003) found that personnel professionals are as equally susceptible as college students to bias employment-related decisions.

Second, the methods used to assess automatic attitudes are often measured using behavioral indicators, and explicit questionnaires (Fikkan et al., 2005). Participants are typically presented pre-recorded interviews including visual stimulus (e.g., photographs, videotapes) along with pre-scripted audio and asked to rate candidates on a variety of job-related criterion (Ding & Stillman, 2005; Howard & Ferris, 1996; Kutcher & Bragger, 2004; Pingitore et al., 1994; Shapiro et al., 2007). One of the most popular questionnaire measures of weight-based bias and anti-fat attitudes is Crandall's (1994) Anti-Fat Attitudes Test. The 13-item test has adequate psychometric properties and includes three subscales: dislike of fat people, fear of fat, and beliefs about controllability of weight (e.g., willpower) (Fikkan et al., 2005). Morrison and O'Connor (1999) constructed a 5-item instrument called the Anti-Fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS) in order to correct limitations in Crandall's dislike of fat people subscale. Thirdly, possibly most important, researchers agree that in comparison to other prejudice (e.g., racism, sexism) and unfair treatment in hiring processes, weight-based prejudice is relatively understudied (Brochu et al., 2007; Fikkan et al., 2005).

The Present Study

The purpose of the current study is to determine if overweight applicants, particularly overweight women, are rated worse than equally qualified normal-weight applicants in the structured interview. Moreover, this study will determine if overweight applicants will be recommended for hire less frequently than a normal-weight applicant based on equal performance in the structured interview setting. The study will also

examine interactions of prior weight-based prejudice, and weight similarity between raters and applicants on overall ratings.

H_1: There will be significant interactions between applicant gender, applicant weight, rater bias, and rater weight in rater performance ratings of each candidate.

Studies have repeatedly shown that equally qualified overweight candidates, especially overweight women, are less likely to be hired than normal-weight candidates (Roehling, 1999; Finkelstein et al., 2007, Puhl et al., 2003; Fikkan et al., 2005; Brochu et al., 2007; Hebl et al., 2002; Polinko et al., 2001; Roehling et al., 2007). Common characteristics of the structured interview (e.g., the same questions asked to all candidates, responses numerically evaluated) tend to reduce discrimination, increase fairness, and results in greater legal defensibility in regards to employee selection (Brecher et al., 2006). However, few studies have investigated whether bias against overweight job applicants is in fact reduced in the structured interview setting.

Hypothesis 1: The overweight applicants' performance will be rated lower than the normal-weight applicants in the structured interview setting.

Hypothesis 2: The overweight female applicants' performance will be rated lower than the overweight male applicants' performance in the structured interview setting.

Obesity is a physical trait that deviates from the accepted cultural norm and is often seen as a sign of flawed character. Overweight individuals are often categorized by society as unhealthy, unattractive, less intelligent, and less ambitious compared to normal-weight individuals (Polinko et al., 2001; Puhl et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2007). The obese stigma is transferred to the workplace and is associated with overweight

individuals approach to work. Overweight workers are often perceived as unprofessional, lacking personal hygiene, lazy, unproductive, and unsuccessful (Carr et al., 2005; Hebl et al., 2003; Sharpiro et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2007). The aforementioned stigma should translate to lower ratings for overweight applicants when prior weight-based bias is present.

Hypothesis 3: Prior weight-based prejudice will interact with the weight of the job applicant to negatively influence performance ratings.

The similarity-attraction paradigm states the more demographic similarity there is between individuals, the more attitudinal similarity is assumed, thus leading to interpersonal attraction (Goldberg, 2003). However, few studies address whether individuals' weight would make them more or less probable to rate overweight candidates differently (Roehling, 1999). A study by O'Brien et al. (2007) found that appearance-related comparison processes are significant in the relationship between body image and anti-fat attitudes. According to the similarity-attraction theory, raters should score candidates higher if they are similar to their own body weight. Similarity will be determined by the raters' self-reported weight on the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Hypothesis 4: There will be an interaction between the applicant's body weight and the rater's self-reported body weight affecting overall performance ratings.

CHAPTER 2

Method

Participants

Two hundred fifty-two undergraduate students from a diverse mid-western university participated in the current study. Six participants provided incomplete data and were excluded from the sample (Final $N = 246$). Due to the nature of the research, the sample was convenient. Students were awarded course credit for participation. Demographic information including gender and self-report of body weight was determined by a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). The participant group included 159 females (64.6% of the sample) and 87 males (35.4%).

Participants were asked to provide a self-reported body weight. The four categories included (a) under-weight, (b) normal weight, (c) overweight, and (d) greatly overweight. Table 1 presents frequencies and percentages for each of the self-reported body weight categories for the overall participant sample and according to gender. It is important to note that none of the participants reported their weight in the "greatly overweight" category and less than 10% self-reported as "underweight." The majority of participants categorized their weight as normal (71.5% of the sample). The normal weight classification percentage was similar across gender (males = 77%, females = 68.6%). The percentage of females which self-reported their weight as "overweight" (23.9%) was larger than the males (13.8%).

Measures/Materials

Interview scripts. Four equivalent scripts of structured interview questions and responses were voice recorded (see Appendix B). Females read two scripts and males

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Self-Reported Weight Classifications of the Sample Overall and Gender

Classification/Group	*Frequency*	*%*
Underweight		
Overall	20	8.1
Female	12	7.5
Male	8	9.2
Normal Weight		
Overall	176	71.5
Female	109	68.6
Male	67	77.0
Overweight		
Overall	50	20.3
Female	38	23.9
Male	12	13.8

read two scripts. The readers' voices were similar, but not identical for the appearance of individual authenticity. The scripts represented equally qualified interviews for an entry-level position within an organization. Similar to Kutcher et al. (2004), the candidate responses were written by the researcher to fall slightly above meets expectations (e.g., 3 on the 4-point scale).

Photographs. The voice recordings were then paired with four photos (Appendix C), two overweight individuals of different gender, and two normal-weight individuals of different gender. Similar to Ding et al. (2005), all of the photographs revealed the interviewee's stomach, chest, shoulders, and head. The individuals in the photographs were dressed in professional attire, similar in regards to age, hair color, and identical in race. Similar to Klesges et al. (1990), the photo images were digitally manipulated utilizing computer software (e.g., Adobe Photoshop) to distort and remove facial features in order to control for facial attractiveness.

Structured interview. After observing each interview orally (e.g., script) and visually (e.g., photo), participants were asked to use a response based anchor scale (see Appendix D) to evaluate each candidate's interview performance. Benchmarks were provided to define what a good, acceptable, and unacceptable response is and the corresponding point value. An overall score was calculated for each candidate by adding the points assigned for each response.

The researcher developed the structured interview based on the methodology presented in a comprehensive review of the literature by Campion, Campion, and Palmer (1997). Campion et al. identified interview content and interview evaluation as the two components of applying structure to an interview. Research has found that the most

predictive questions are those that are behavioral or situational in nature (Campion et al., 1997). For the purposes of the present study, behavioral questions were asked (e.g., describe a time where you had multiple tasks to accomplish in a short period of time). Another prevalent content structuring technique applied by the researcher includes the standardization of questions asked of each candidate (Campion et al., 2007). Moreover, all interviewees were presented the same questions in the same sequence in order to evaluate all applicants on equal criteria. The researcher also structured the interview evaluation by implementing a consistent and mathematical scoring system. Further, rating scales for each item were anchored with behaviors.

Prejudice scale. Following the recommendation for hire, participants were given Morrison et al. (1999) Anti-Fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS) to determine existing levels of prejudice toward overweight individuals (see Appendix E). The AFAS instrument consists of five items that measure negative attitudes toward overweight individuals. These items are 1) Fat people are less sexually attractive than thin people; 2) I would never date a fat person; 3) On average, fat people are lazier than thin people; 4) Fat people only have themselves to blame for their weight; and 5) It is disgusting when a fat person wears a bathing suit at the beach. Answers were measured on a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate stronger anti-fat attitudes. Moreover, each participant's total AFAS score was categorized as high (18 to 25), moderate (9 to 17) and low (1 to 8) levels of bias. In a study examining the psychometric properties of the AFAS, Morrison et al. found the scale possessed a unidimensional factor structure, construct validity, satisfactory reliability for both men and women, and internal consistency.

Self-report. Finally, participants were given a demographic questionnaire asking them to disclose their gender and self-reported body weight. The self-reporting method used to obtain body weight data is similar to the methods used in a previous study by Drewnowski and Yee (1987) to determine body weight satisfaction among males and females.

Pilot study. In order to ensure that the instruments developed by the researcher (e.g., structured interview, scripts, photographs) were effective, a pilot study was conducted and evaluated by subject matter experts (SMEs). A panel of SMEs was given the response based anchor scale and asked to rate each candidate's interview performance. After viewing each of the candidate's photographs and listening to each interview script, the panel was given two minutes to determine its ratings. In order to deem the instruments valid and candidates equally qualified, all SMEs rated each candidate's interview question performance consistently. Further, point values were within one point of each other.

Procedure

Participants were required to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix F) prior to participating in the study. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application (see Appendix G) for approval to use human subjects was submitted to ensure that data are collected ethically in the study. Four equivalent scripts of structured interview questions and responses were created and voice recorded. The scripts represented equally qualified interviews for an entry-level position within an organization. The four structured interview scripts were evaluated by SMEs and determined to be equivalently qualified candidates by using the response based anchor scale. The voice recordings were

paired with four photos, two overweight individuals of different gender, and two normal-weight individuals of different gender. In order to control for any order effects, the paired sets of audio recordings and photos were shown in a different sequence during the different data collection sessions.

After reading aloud the informed consent document, the participants were asked to sign and date the form. They were then instructed in the procedure of the study. First, they were told that they were to rate four pre-recorded candidate interviews for an entry-level position as if they were hiring managers for an organization. They were then given the response based anchor scale and instructed on how to properly use it. Participants then observed one candidate at a time, and then they were asked to rate the candidate with the response based anchor scale. Participants were given two minutes to rate each candidate. To control for order effects throughout the study, the sequence in which the interviews were presented was offset.

Once completed, participants were asked to fill out the AFAS to determine existing weight-based bias, as well as a demographic questionnaire to determine their gender and self-perception of their weight. In order to maintain internal validity, the AFAS and demographic scale was only given after candidate ratings were finished so that participants were not aware of the premise of the study. At the completion of all portions of the study, participants were debriefed.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Descriptive Results for Participant Ratings

Participants were asked to rate an overweight male (J.A.) and female (L.S.) candidate and a normal-weight male (B.J.) and female (S.T.) on their responses to five standardized behavioral-based questions. The questions were directed toward desired workplace behaviors such as (a) problem solving, (b) teamwork, (c) adaptability, (d) communication, and (e) professional appearance. The same questions were asked to each candidate in the same sequence. The candidate's response to each question was rated by the participants on a 1 to 4 point ordinal scale. Scores for each interview were then summed for each of the four candidates to derive a total score for the interview. The total scores ranged in value from 5 – 20. Lower scores indicated a lower level of desirability to hire the candidate and vice versa.

Tables 2 through 5 present measures of central tendency and of spread for the five workplace behaviors and total score for each of the four candidates for the sample overall and genders of the raters. The mean scores of all four applicants were in the upper range for both the workplace behaviors and the candidates' total scores. The overweight male (J.A.) received the lowest total mean score ($M = 17.52$, $SD = 2.14$) and the normal weight male (B.J.) received the highest mean total score ($M = 17.72$, $SD = 2.01$). Female participants rated the overweight female applicant (L.S.) highest overall ($M = 18.06$, $SD = 2.19$) followed closely by the normal weight male (B.J.) ($M = 18.05$, $SD = 1.76$). Males rated the two normal weight applicants higher than the overweight applicants, with the normal weight male (B.J.) receiving a slightly higher mean score ($M = 17.11$, $SD = 2.31$)

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "B.J." (Normal Weight Male)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Problem Solving					
Overall	246	3.41	3.00	0.61	1 - 4
Female	159	3.46	3.00	0.58	1 - 4
Male	87	3.33	3.00	0.64	2 - 4
Teamwork					
Overall	246	3.45	4.00	0.65	1 - 4
Female	159	3.53	4.00	0.62	1 - 4
Male	87	3.30	3.00	0.68	2 - 4
Adaptability					
Overall	246	3.56	4.00	0.61	2 - 4
Female	159	3.60	4.00	0.58	2 - 4
Male	87	3.48	4.00	0.66	2 - 4
Communication					
Overall	246	3.54	4.00	0.60	1 - 4
Female	159	3.61	4.00	0.51	2 - 4
Male	87	3.40	4.00	0.72	1 - 4

Table 2 (Cont.)

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "B.J." (Normal Weight Male)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Professional Appearance					
Overall	246	3.76	4.00	0.53	1 - 4
Female	159	3.85	4.00	0.41	2 - 4
Male	87	3.60	4.00	0.67	1 - 4
Total Score					
Overall	246	17.72	18.00	2.01	9 - 20
Female	159	18.05	18.00	1.76	12 - 20
Male	87	17.11	17.00	2.31	9 - 20

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "S.T." (Normal Weight Female)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Problem Solving					
Overall	246	3.50	4.00	0.60	1 - 4
Female	159	3.53	4.00	0.63	1 - 4
Male	87	3.44	3.00	0.60	2 - 4
Teamwork					
Overall	246	3.65	4.00	0.61	1 - 4
Female	159	3.70	4.00	0.55	1 - 4
Male	87	3.57	4.00	0.71	1 - 4
Adaptability					
Overall	246	3.33	3.00	0.72	1 - 4
Female	159	3.42	4.00	0.72	1 - 4
Male	87	3.15	3.00	0.71	1 - 4
Communication					
Overall	246	3.51	4.00	0.62	1 - 4
Female	159	3.57	4.00	0.57	2 - 4
Male	87	3.41	4.00	0.69	1 - 4

Table 3 (Cont.)

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "S.T." (Normal Weight Female)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Professional Appearance					
Overall	246	3.54	4.00	0.62	1 - 4
Female	159	3.57	4.00	0.59	2 - 4
Male	87	3.49	4.00	0.68	1 - 4
Total Score					
Overall	246	17.54	18.00	2.20	9 - 20
Female	159	17.79	19.00	2.10	10 - 20
Male	87	17.07	17.00	2.32	9 - 20

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "J.A." (Overweight Male)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Problem Solving					
Overall	246	3.38	3.00	0.66	1 - 4
Female	159	3.48	4.00	0.63	2 - 4
Male	87	3.20	3.00	0.70	1 - 4
Teamwork					
Overall	246	3.55	4.00	0.62	2 - 4
Female	159	3.64	4.00	0.59	2 - 4
Male	87	3.40	3.00	0.66	2 - 4
Adaptability					
Overall	246	3.37	3.00	0.65	1 - 4
Female	159	3.41	3.00	0.65	2 - 4
Male	87	3.29	3.00	0.65	1 - 4
Communication					
Overall	246	3.49	4.00	0.65	2 - 4
Female	159	3.55	4.00	0.63	2 - 4
Male	87	3.37	3.00	0.67	2 - 4

Table 4 (Cont.)

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "J.A." (Overweight Male)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Professional Appearance					
Overall	246	3.74	4.00	0.53	1 - 4
Female	159	3.77	4.00	0.51	1 - 4
Male	87	3.68	4.00	0.56	1 - 4
Total Score					
Overall	246	17.52	18.00	2.14	9 - 20
Female	159	17.84	18.00	2.04	12 - 20
Male	87	16.93	17.00	2.21	9 - 20

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "L.S." (Overweight Female)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Problem Solving					
Overall	246	3.50	4.00	0.68	1 - 4
Female	159	3.58	4.00	0.64	2 - 4
Male	87	3.36	3.00	0.72	1 - 4
Teamwork					
Overall	246	3.54	4.00	0.67	1 - 4
Female	159	3.64	4.00	0.63	1 - 4
Male	87	3.37	3.00	0.72	1 - 4
Adaptability					
Overall	246	3.56	4.00	0.64	1 - 4
Female	159	3.66	4.00	0.59	1 - 4
Male	87	3.38	3.00	0.69	2 - 4
Communication					
Overall	246	3.58	4.00	0.63	1 - 4
Female	159	3.69	4.00	0.53	1 - 4
Male	87	3.38	4.00	0.74	1 - 4

Table 5 (Cont.)

Descriptive Statistics for Five Workplace Behaviors and Total Interview Score for Applicant "L.S." (Overweight Female)

Characteristic/Group	*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
Professional Appearance					
Overall	246	3.45	4.00	0.71	1 - 4
Female	159	3.50	4.00	0.70	1 - 4
Male	87	3.36	3.00	0.72	1 - 4
Total Score					
Overall	246	17.63	18.00	2.44	8 - 20
Female	159	18.06	19.00	2.19	9 - 20
Male	87	16.84	17.00	2.67	8 - 20

normal weight male (B.J.) receiving a slightly higher mean score ($M = 17.11$, $SD = 2.31$) than the normal weight female (S.T.) ($M = 17.07$, $SD = 2.32$).

Following the interview rating, each participant was given the Anti-Fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS). The AFAS consists of five items, each measured on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated stronger anti-fat attitudes. Internal consistency reliability of the AFAS with the study sample ($N = 246$) was investigated with Cronbach's alpha and returned a value of .74. A Cronbach's alpha value of .70 or greater is considered acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics for the items of the AFAS survey for the sample overall and participant gender. The total scores derived from the AFAS instrument were classified into three groups, (a) low (total score of 1 to 8); (b) moderate (total score of 9 to 17); and (c) high bias (total score of 18 to 25). Table 7 presents the frequency and percentages of the AFAS bias groups for the overall sample and participant gender. Results for all participants were close to the scale median of each item ($Mdn = 3$) and on the total score ($Mdn = 15$) (see Table 7). The majority of the participant sample was classified as having a moderate bias (71.1%). Moreover, 73.6% of females and 66.7% of males scored in the moderate bias range (see Table 7).

Hypothesis Testing

The data were examined through an analysis of variance (ANOVA), characteristic of group comparison research (e.g., Pingitore et al., 1994; Kutcher et al., 1993). An experimental 2 (applicant weight) x 2 (applicant gender) x 3 (raters' prior bias) x 4 (rater's self-reported weight) mixed factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) analysis was planned prior to data collection. However, due to the resulting structure of the data

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for the Anti-fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS) for the Sample Overall and Gender

Item/Group		*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
1. Fat people are less attractive than thin people.						
	Overall	246	3.31	3.00	1.11	1 - 5
	Female	159	3.05	3.00	1.08	1 - 5
	Male	87	3.79	4.00	1.00	1 - 5
2. I would never date a fat person.						
	Overall	246	2.72	3.00	1.23	1 - 5
	Female	159	2.48	2.00	1.15	1 - 5
	Male	87	3.14	3.00	1.26	1 - 5
3. On average, fat people are lazier than thin people.						
	Overall	246	2.70	3.00	1.23	1 - 5
	Female	159	2.54	2.00	1.18	1 - 5
	Male	87	2.99	3.00	1.27	1 - 5
4. Fat people only have themselves to blame for their weight.						
	Overall	246	2.52	2.00	1.10	1 - 5
	Female	159	2.28	2.00	1.05	1 - 5
	Male	87	2.97	3.00	1.06	1 - 5

Table 6 (Cont.)

Descriptive Statistics for the Anti-fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS) for the Sample Overall and Gender

Item/Group		*N*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Range*
5. It is disgusting when a fat person wears a bathing suit at the beach.						
	Overall	246	2.80	3.00	1.14	1 - 5
	Female	159	2.67	3.00	1.15	1 - 5
	Male	87	3.03	3.00	1.09	1 - 5
Total Score						
	Overall	246	14.05	14.00	4.09	1 - 5
	Female	159	13.03	13.00	3.87	1 - 5
	Male	87	15.92	16.00	3.83	1 - 5

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of Categorical Bias Levels Derived from the Anti-fat Attitudes Scale for the Sample Overall and Gender

Category/Group	*Frequency*	*%*
Low Bias (total score of 1 – 8)		
Overall	24	9.8
Female	23	14.5
Male	1	1.1
Moderate Bias (total score of 9 – 17)		
Overall	175	71.1
Female	117	73.6
Male	58	66.7
High Bias (total score of 18 – 25)		
Overall	47	19.1
Female	19	11.9
Male	28	32.2

collected, the mixed ANOVA was performed to test the hypotheses, but with the within groups independent variable of "applicant" with four categories (a) normal weight male, (b) normal weight female, (c) overweight male, and (d) overweight female. The two independent between groups variables were (1) raters' self-reported body weight, with three classifications of (a) underweight, (b) normal weight, and (c) overweight; and (2) AFAS bias rating with three classifications of (a) low, (b) moderate, and (c) high levels of bias. There are only three classifications of rater's self-reported body weight instead of four because none of the participants reported their weight in the "greatly overweight" category. Moreover, instead of two levels of applicant weight and two levels of applicant gender, the variables were combined to form four categories of "applicant." The change was made so that the researcher could observe the variation between the overall scores given to the applicants and the different rater characteristics (gender, self-reported weight). The dependent variable was the overall total scores of the structured interview. A 95% level of significance was set for testing the hypotheses. SPSS statistics software was used for the analyses.

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis suggested that the overweight applicants would receive lower interview ratings in comparison to the normal-weight applicants, which were expected to be rated higher. I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no statistical significance found between overweight and normal-weight applicant groups as relates to the total interview scores of the four applicants ($F(2, 237) = 0.33$, $p = .72$, $\eta^2 = .003$). Moreover, mean total interview scores for the four applicants were similar and a significant difference was not indicated (see Tables 2-5).

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis suggested that lower overall performance ratings would be given to the overweight female applicant in comparison to the overweight male applicant. I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that the results indicated that there was not a statistical significance between overweight gender groups effect related to the total interview scores of the two applicants ($F(2, 237) = 0.33$, $p = .72$, $\eta^2 = .003$). Moreover, mean total interview scores for the two overweight applicants were similar and a significant difference was not indicated (see Tables 4-5).

Hypothesis 3. The third hypothesis suggested that prior weight-based prejudice levels of the raters would interact with the weight of the job applicant to influence overall performance ratings. I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was not a statistically significant interaction effect between AFAS bias ratings and the total interview scores of the applicants ($F(3, 236) = 1.92$, $p = .127$, $\eta^2 = .013$).

Hypothesis 4. The fourth hypothesis suggested that a significant interaction between the applicant's body weight and the rater's self-reported body weight (e.g., weight ideal for body type, over ideal body weight, etc.) would affect overall performance ratings. I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was not a statistically significant interaction effect between applicant and rater body weight and the total interview scores, ($F(3, 236) = 1.68$, $p = .097$, $\eta^2 = .021$).

In summary, the researcher did not find significant evidence to support the proposed hypotheses. In Chapter 4 the researcher will discuss the findings further, limitations of the current study, and provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The premise of the current study was that weight-based discrimination would exist in the structured interview and negatively influence the overweight candidates' ratings. The researcher did not find significant evidence for the suggested hypotheses, which is inconsistent with the findings of previous research. Although the findings did not significantly support the hypotheses, the researcher found interesting data that are worthy of highlighting.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that lower overall ratings would be given to the overweight candidates and higher overall ratings to the normal-weight candidates which were expected to be rated higher. The current findings were inconsistent with a meta-analysis of weight-based bias in the workplace by Baltes and colleagues (2008), which found differences in the magnitude of the effects of weight-based bias found in the hiring process. The normal weight candidates' averaged higher ratings overall (17.63) in the current study, however, the overweight candidates average ratings were only slightly lower (17.57) in comparison.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that lower overall ratings will be given to the overweight female applicant in comparison to the overweight male applicant. The researcher found contrary results to the proposed hypothesis in the current study. In fact, the overweight female candidate averaged slightly higher ratings overall (17.63) in comparison to the overweight male candidate ratings (17.52). This is inconsistent with Pingitore et al. (1994) who found that overweight female applicants were less likely to be hired than overweight male applicants. The findings are also inconsistent with Ding et al. (2005)

who found that weight was a key factor that affected the perceived suitability of overweight female applicants.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that existing weight-based prejudice levels of the raters would interact with the weight of the candidate to influence overall performance ratings. The overall participant sample classified as having a moderate bias, however, the candidate ratings were not significantly different between overweight and normal-weight candidates. In other words, the researcher did not find evidence of a significant interaction between the candidate weight and AFAS scores. The assumption can be made that the participants' moderate prejudice for overweight individuals did not affect their overall interview ratings. This is inconsistent with previous research by Pingitore et al. (1994), which found that weight-based bias explained approximately 35% of the variance in hiring decisions.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that an interaction between the applicant's body weight and the rater's self-reported body weight would affect overall performance ratings based on the similarity-attraction paradigm. As aforementioned, the research did not find significant differences in the overall interview ratings between the overweight and normal weight candidates. Moreover, there was no evidence found that the similarity-attraction paradigm between the raters and candidates body weight affected the overall interview ratings. The findings are inconsistent with previous research by Dobbins et al. (1992), which found interviewer-interviewee similarity had a significant effect on interview performance ratings in the structured interview.

Based on the current research findings, conclusions about the reliability of the structured interview and the participant sample can be drawn. Because there was very

little variability between raters' overall interview scores, the findings suggest that the structured interview process increased inter-rater reliability and limited the existing weight-based bias that affected the overall ratings and hiring decision. These findings are congruent with a number of meta-analysis studies conducted which focused on the validity of the structured interview. Huffcutt and Arthur (1994) found that structure is a major moderator of interview validity and that the validity increased as the structure increased. Conway et al. (1995) found that increasing standardization of the interview increased inter-rater reliability and construct validity.

Kutcher et al. (2004) evaluated whether the bias against overweight job candidates would be less prominent when the interview is highly standardized by comparing the structured and unstructured interview methods. Kutcher and colleagues found that the structured interview decreased the variability between raters and reduced bias against overweight job candidates. The current study implemented a highly structured and standardized interview method. The majority of the participant sample (71.1%) reported a moderate level of weight-based bias according to the AFAS, however, the overall interview scores were very similar among the four candidates. Similar to previous research, the researcher concludes that the structured interview method possibly increased inter-rater reliability, decreased variability between raters, and reduced bias against overweight candidates in the hiring decision. If correct, then structured interview would be responsible for increased fairness in the interview process and hiring decision.

Conclusions can also be made about the participant sample and weight-based bias. In a study by Springbett (1958), the researcher found that in 85% of the cases studied, interviewers tend to make their decisions based on physical appearance during the first

few minutes of the interview. Further, the interviewer used the interview primarily to search for negative evidence about the interviewee. The results of the current research do not reflect these findings, as the overall ratings did not indicate weight-based bias.

A study by Ding et al. (2005) investigated discrimination against overweight females in the selection process. Participants included 56 practicing recruitment consultants from 16 different organizations in New Zealand. The researchers found that overweight female job applicants were discriminated against in the employment interview. This is contrary to the findings of the current study in which the overweight female candidate was rated higher than both the overweight male and normal weight female.

These findings suggest that weight-based prejudice, specifically toward overweight females, is less prevalent in the overall demographic of the study's sample. More specifically, the participants' geographic culture, age, and gender of the sample might have contributed to the observed weight-based prejudice levels. First, the state of Kansas is located in the mid-west which is generally considered to be more "down-to-earth" (i.e., nonjudgmental) in comparison to other U.S. populations (i.e., Los Angeles), which generally place more importance on physical appearance. Secondly, the majority of participants (84.1%) were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. This specific age group may be less likely to possess high levels of weight-based bias since obesity in the U.S. has historically increased as a society (Ferraro et al., 2003). Lastly, the majority of the participant sample was female (64.6%). According to the present study, women consistently rated the overweight candidates higher than the male participants.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of the current study is the overall generalizability of the findings. Moreover, it is difficult to accurately replicate the traditional face-to-face interview experience in a controlled research environment. First, the candidates were presented to the participants via digital picture and audio recording instead of face-to-face. This presentation method was used to control for extraneous variables in order to observe differences in perceptions based solely on physical appearance. However, this method cannot completely replicate a face-to-face interview in the workplace since there are many other variables commonly involved.

An additional limitation of the current study was the demographic characteristics of the participants. The participant group did not equally represent each gender (64.6% female, 35.4% male) or weight class according to the participants' self-report (8.1% under-weight, 71.6% normal weight, 20.3% overweight). None of the participants reported their weight in the "greatly overweight" category. Ideally the participant sample would include an equal number of both male and female and body weight categories to improve the findings generalizability and accurately test the proposed hypotheses.

Efforts to address the aforementioned limitations in future research could be taken by using a sample of multiple organizations over a period of time. A similar approach to conducting the research could be followed in the workplace setting. The same interview, bias, and demographic data could be collected for the interviewers and interviewees. However, the researcher would yield control over other variables by conducting research in the workplace instead of in a controlled research environment. A few examples would

be the consistency in the candidates' weight, responses to the interview questions, prior work experience, technical skill set, non-verbal behavior, etc.

Weight-based bias and discrimination research in the workplace will continue to be a topic of importance in the United States as state governments consider new legislation and the costs of health care continue to increase. Legislation specifically addressing weight-based discrimination has been considered by a number of states, most recently Massachusetts in 2008 (Employers State Law Alert, 2009). Recent court rulings in Indiana and Oregon have required businesses to pay for weight-loss surgery under the ADA (Smerd, 2009). These types of cases and the associated costs may cause employers to be more cautious when hiring people who are overweight. An important function of the Industrial/Organizational Psychology profession is to research efficient and fair hiring processes regardless of body weight and the associated stigma. The current study adds to the body of research conducted in order to better understand and find a solution for the bias that exists in the interview process.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire and Self-report of Body Weight

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please check the gender category that identifies you:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Please list your age: _____

Please list your major: _____

Please check the collegiate level that best identifies you:

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Post-graduate

Do you work? ☐ Part-time ☐ Full-time

Please check the category or categories you most readily identify with:

- ☐ White/Non-Hispanic
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- ☐ Other

Please check category you feel is most accurate of your current body weight:

- ☐ I am under the normal-weight for my body type.
- ☐ I am of normal-weight for my body type.
- ☐ I am over the normal-weight for my body type.
- ☐ I am greatly over the normal-weight for my body type.

Appendix B

Interview Script

Question #1

Describe a time where you had multiple tasks to accomplish in a short period of time. How did you prioritize the tasks? If you did not accomplish items on your priority list, how did you decide whether or not to complete them? What was the outcome?

Response

At my previous job, I had to multi-task on a daily basis in order to meet short and long-term deadlines. Listing my priorities on paper always helped me to organize my time. I would always place time sensitive tasks at the top the list in order of importance. Next, I would similarly list tasks with more distant deadlines. As you are aware, sometimes these tasks require early preparation, at least on some parts. So, I would put together a timeline, benchmarking progress deadlines, in order to complete these tasks on time. This simple paper and pencil method must have worked well, because I do not remember a time that I missed a deadline.

Question #2

Describe an action you have taken in the past to improve the performance of your team or department. What did you do to gain the support of your team or department? What was the outcome of your actions?

Response

As I mentioned in the previous answer, time management played a key role in my previous job. Depending on how well my team managed our time determined our overall success. So, in order to better manage our workload in the office, I implemented a planning cycle for each project. I used my Outlook calendar on the computer to send out task reminders to project members reminding them of where they should be in the preparations process so that we can stay ahead of our deadlines. This way our deadlines never snuck up on us. My team liked this process because it helped everyone keep on pace to complete the project. Our team took pride in our work, and meeting deadlines was an area that we were consistently complimented on by our manager.

Question #3

Describe a time when you had to adapt to a changing situation or shift quickly from one job to another. How did you make the necessary adjustments? What was the outcome?

Response

At my last job, there was major turnover in the management team at one point in time. As a result, our team went from reporting to one person one day to another person the next. The new manager had a very different leadership style than our previous manager, and also had a very different vision of what our department's priorities were. Where our previous manager was relaxed, and flexible, our new manager was tense, and controlling. As a result, some of the tasks that had previously been first priority were now secondary, and vice versa. I had to do lots of shifting gears in order to complete that tasks that the new manager found most important. Also, I had to significantly adjust how I prepared for my meetings with our new manager. Formerly, our meetings were very informal and did not require much preparation. However, now I had to come prepared with materials and an extra detailed approach to our discussions. The bottom line was that I had to find more time to prepare for our meetings, and re-prioritize my workload. Overall, I feel that I made a smooth transition, and dealt well with the changes.

Appendix C

Candidate Photos

Normal-weight Male (B.J.)

Overweight Male (J.A.)

Normal-weight Female (S.T.)

Overweight Female (L.S.)

Appendix D

Candidate Evaluation Form

Please rate candidate on their performance in the following areas using the 4–point scale.

1 = Unacceptable, 2 = Acceptable, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent

Adaptability				
Questions	3. Describe a time when you had to adapt to a changing situation or shift quickly from one job to another.			
	How did you make the necessary adjustments?			
	What was the outcome?			
Benchmarks	**Unacceptable**	**Below Expectations**	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**
	1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**	**4 Points**
	Was unable to adapt to new situation.	Adapted to new situation without significant reduction in productivity.	Adapted to new situation with no reduction in productivity.	Quickly adapted to new situation with no reduction in productivity.
	Resisted change.	Did not resist change.	Re-prioritized tasks to ensure deadlines were met.	Re-prioritized tasks to ensure deadlines were met.
	Work was not finished on time.	Deadlines were met.	Did not resist change.	Quickly learned new way of doing the job.
			Deadlines were met.	Embraced change.
				Deadlines were met.
Notes:				**Rating: _____**

Communication Skills				
Question	4. How effective were the candidate's communication skills during the interview?			
Benchmarks	Unacceptable	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points
	Demonstrated ineffective listening skills.	Demonstrated effective listening skills.	Demonstrated effective listening skills.	Demonstrated effective listening skills.
	Inappropriate use of language (grammar, vocabulary).	Appropriate use of language (grammar, vocabulary).	Ideas and thoughts were expressed clearly.	Ideas and thoughts were expressed clearly.
			Appropriate use of language (grammar, vocabulary).	Logical organization of thoughts.
				Appropriate use of language (grammar, vocabulary).
Notes:				Rating:_____

Problem Solving				
Questions	**1. Describe a time where you had multiple tasks to accomplish in a short period of time.**			
	How did you prioritize the tasks?			
	If you did not accomplish items on your priority list, how did you decide whether or not to complete them.			
	What was the outcome?			
Benchmarks	**Unacceptable**	**Below Expectations**	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**
	1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**	**4 Points**
	Utilized an ineffective strategy for prioritizing tasks.	Partially utilized an effective strategy for prioritizing tasks.	Utilized an effective strategy for prioritizing tasks.	Utilized a very effective strategy for prioritizing tasks.
	Failed to complete important tasks on time.	Completed the majority of important tasks on time.	Completed important tasks on time.	Consistently completed important tasks on time.
	Incomplete tasks were of major consequence to organization's success.	No major negative impact on the organization's success due to tasks left incomplete.	No negative impact on organization's success due to tasks left incomplete.	No negative impact on organization's success due to tasks left incomplete.
Notes:				**Rating: _____**

Teamwork				
Questions	**2. Describe an action you have taken in the past to improve the performance of your team or department.**			
	What did you do to gain the support of your team or department?			
	What was the outcome of your actions?			
Benchmarks	**Unacceptable**	**Below Expectations**	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**
	1 Point	**2 Points**	**3 Points**	**4 Points**
	Did not set high standards for self or others.	Sets standards for self and others.	Sets high standards for self and others.	Sets high standards for self and others.
	No action was taken to improve performance.	Actions resulted in improved performance for team or department.	Is dissatisfied with mediocre performance.	Motivates others to achieve desired goals.
			Actions resulted in improved performance for team or department.	Is dissatisfied with mediocre performance.
				Actions resulted in improved performance for team or department.
Notes:				**Rating: _____**

Professional Appearance				
Question	5. Please rate the candidate on his/her professional appearance.			
Benchmarks	Unacceptable	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points
	Underdressed for the interview.	Casually dressed for the interview.	Dressed in appropriate attire for the interview.	Dressed in appropriate attire for the interview.
	Appears untidy and ungroomed.	Appearance is somewhat neat and groomed.	Appearance is somewhat neat and groomed.	Appearance is neat and groomed.
Notes:			Rating: _____	Total Overall Score: ____

Appendix E

Anti-fat Attitudes Scale

To what degree do you agree with the following statements?

Please circle the corresponding numerical value as follows:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

QUESTIONS						
1	Fat people are less sexually attractive than thin people.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
2	I would never date a fat person.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
3	On average, fat people are lazier than thin people.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
4	Fat people only have themselves to blame for their weight.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
5	It is disgusting when a fat person wears a bathing suit at the beach.					
	1	2	3	4	5	

Appendix F

Informed Consent Document Form

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

The Department of Psychology, Art Therapy, Rehabilitation, and Mental Health Counseling at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research and related activities. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach. Likewise, if you choose not to participate, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

During this study you will be evaluating four interview candidates as though you are a hiring manager within an organization. The interviews have been previously recorded, so you will be evaluating the voice recorded version of the interview. A photo of each applicant will also be displayed on the projector screen during the auditable interview. This study should take approximately one hour.

In order to ensure confidentiality, you will not be asked to provide any information that could identify you personally in this study.

You should not experience any discomfort or be placed in any risk through participation in this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the efficiency of interview procedures currently in practice in most organizations.

If at any time during the study you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw from the study without penalization.

For more information regarding this research, please contact Graham Pionkowski by email at grahampionkowski@yahoo.com, or by phone at (919) 702-6533.

"I have read the above statement and have been fully advised of the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach."

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

Appendix G

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

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November 19, 2009

Graham Pionkowski
PARM
10301 Falls Mill Drive Apt. 107
Raleigh, NC 27614

Dear Mr. Pionkowski:

Your application for approval to use human subjects, entitled "An Examination of the Presence of Weight-based Bias Within the Structured Interview," has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials.

The identification number for this research protocol is 10035 and it has been approved for the period 11/2009 to 11/2010.

If it is necessary to conduct research with subjects past this expiration date, it will be necessary to submit a request for a time extension. If the time period is longer than one year, you must submit an annual update. If there are any modifications to the original approved protocol, such as changes in survey instruments, changes in procedures, or changes to possible risks to subjects, you must submit a request for approval for modifications. The above requests should be submitted on the form Request for Time Extension, Annual Update, or Modification to Research Protocol. This form is available at www.emporia.edu/research/docs/irbmod.doc.

Requests for extensions should be submitted at least 30 days before the expiration date. Annual updates should be submitted within 30 days after each 12-month period. Modifications should be submitted as soon as it becomes evident that changes have occurred or will need to be made.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

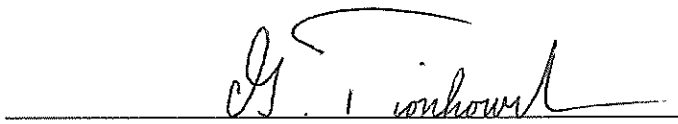
Sincerely,

Robyn Long

Robyn Long
Chair, Institutional Review Board

pf

I, Graham C. Pionkowski, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.



Signature of Author

April 24, 2012
Date

An Examination of the Presence of Weight-based Bias within the Structured Interview
Title of Thesis

Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

Date Received